

THE UNHAPPY FATE OF SOZO SAM

BY BOZEMAN BULGER

THE leading hitters of the Willow Swamp League would frequently get together, look over the lean appearance of their batter averages, and try to pick flaws in the pitching of Sozo Sam.

"There's nothing to it," would be the final conclusion. "He's got nothing but a pair of shoestrings and a prayer. Take his luck away, and he couldn't beat a drum." In other words, they figured that the pitching arm of the deadly twirler of the Poison Oaks was a "dead one."

And in a way it was. Up and down the long muscle leading from his elbow to his shoulder there were as many charley-horses, or muscle knots, as there are peanuts in a five-cent bag. The kink in his curve was completely gone, and his fast ball floated up to the plate like a toy balloon.

These facts were well known to every player in the league, and being batters of the first class, they also knew very well what an athlete should have to be a good pitcher.

"But that ain't the question," as Zeke Bender, of the Nettle Rashes, aptly put it. "We know he ain't got nothing; but the question is how does he manage to win? That fellow that the local writers call Dame Luck ain't going to hold him in his arms for the rest of his life."

The players knew that Zeke had spoken the truth. The records showed that Sozo Sam did win almost as he pleased. Knowing that he had "nothing," these opposing hitters naturally came to the conclusion that all he did was to face his shoes, toss his glove into the diamond, and trust to the kindness of Fate. It was the only explanation.

Throughout the Willow Swamp League there were many veteran pitchers who were reputed as "having nothing" and still could win; but their cases were not exactly similar to that of Sozo Sam. Most of them had no speed and little curve; but, somehow, when the ball came floating up to the plate looking as big as a balloon, the most stalwart hitters would swing at it, only to bump a weak little grounder to the short-stop and be thrown out at first. Their secret was "control."

"These fellows are what we call the Hadji of the game," explained Bull Tarkington, a former college player, to a young recruit who had just joined the Nettle Rashes. "You know, over in the Orient the old fellows who have made the trip across the sands to Mecca are called the wise men, or Hadji, because they have been the route and know something. They are field in great respect."

"Wise guys is what they is," interjected Steve O'Hara, who was listening.

"Exactly," went on Tarkington. "They have lost their strength in the arm, and they pitch with their heads. They have control, and can put the ball where they want to, or, rather, where the batter doesn't want them to. Do you get me?"

"Sure, I understand," said the recruit rather timidly; "but ain't this Sozo Sam one of them Hadji?"

"No, he isn't," Tarkington replied. "And that's what has got our goats. You see, this Sozo Sam hasn't even got control. Some times he is as wild as a March hare, and still he manages to settle down when it comes to a pinch and beat us."

The young recruit picked up his glove and went to the outfield for morning practice, a much puzzled young fellow. He was no more bewildered, however, than were his team mates who had wrestled with this baffling mystery since the beginning of the season. They could

recall more instances than they had fingers and toes when Sozo Sam had given three batters bases on ball, only to tighten up and strike out the next three men. He always managed to conserve what strength he had until a crucial moment, and then by a dexterous move turn a certain victory for his opponents into a humiliating defeat.

ON the day following this conversation between Tarkington, the former college boy, and the recruit, an exciting game was played at Bobbletown, the home grounds of the Poison Oaks, between that club and their bitter rivals, the Nettle Rashes. As usual, it was a stubbornly fought battle up to the last minute. Then the wonderful pitching of Sozo Sam again triumphed for the Poison Oaks. In the last half of the ninth inning, just when the Nettle Rashes had started a rally, he struck out Steve O'Hara, Zeke Bender, and Shorty McKay in a row. There were three men on bases at the time, and a great howl of disap-



"Oh, So-So," Replied Sam.

pointment went up from the visiting players' bench.

"You can't tell me that fellow is a pitcher!" snarled McKay as he came back to the bench and took a dipper of water after striking out. Ball players always take a drink of water after striking out. Swat Milligan once explained that phenomenon by saying, "It's the only thing they can do."

"He hasn't got a thing!" went on McKay. "I stood up there and waited until I got one right in the groove. It came just where I wanted it; but somehow when I swung I lost sight of the ball and —"

"Say, Shorty," asked Zeke Bender with sudden interest, "did you notice a flash of some kind just as you swung at that ball?"

"I wouldn't exactly call it a flash," answered McKay. "I tell the truth, I couldn't see anything for a minute."

"I was kinder blinded," I said. "Say what you please," spoke up O'Hara, who had also struck out, "but I'll swear I noticed some kind of a flash of light, and when I swung the bat my eye wasn't on the ball. It looks to me like a ten-year-old boy ought to hit that fellow. He ain't got a thing. I'd like to hit against pitchers like that all season."

"Better cut that last speech," interrupted the manager rather sourly, as he began poking the bats into the big leather bag, preparatory to leaving the grounds. "That kind of talk makes me tired! You've had a chance to bat against this fellow all season, and I notice that none of you have ever been able to hit him in a pinch."

"Yes, that's the funny part about it," observed Zeke Bender, as he began looking for his glove and sweater. "We go out there and get ten or twelve hits off him, and then lose the game. He always gets us in a pinch. We've certainly got to do something about this Sozo Sam. I tell you there was a flash of light or something that struck my eyes when I slashed at that ball, and you can't make me believe it was good pitching."

There was a big guffaw from the other players, and Bliny Street was so unkind as to remark severely:

"There you go again, Zeke. You are always there with some kind of an alibi. I notice there wasn't anything in your eye when you hit him safe for the first time."

As the beaten Nettle Rashes filed slowly out of the park the young recruit, who was known to the other players as Soomy, hung back until Zeke Bender had found his glove.

"Say, Zeke," said the recruit as he and Bender closed the gate behind them, "I think you are right. I sneaked up back of the catcher when you struck out, and I lost sight of that ball myself when you fanned. Something seemed to get in my eye. I don't know what it was; but I believe you had the same trouble."

"It's the truth sure as you are living!" replied Bender. "And some of these days the manager will find it out. I'll get that Sozo Sam and his dinky curve ball yet!"

THAT night Sozo Sam, the pitcher who "had nothing," was the toast of all Bobbletown. His victory over the Nettle Rashes had practically cinched the pennant for the Poison Oaks, and the town was trying to do him honor. The local baseball writers gathered round the famous pitcher at his hotel and begged him to explain his wonderful work in detail. One of them offered him a full page in the Sunday issue for a signed story. Naturally, Sozo Sam was pleased at the opportunity for more fame, and smiled; but in answer to all their questions he would only shake his head.

"I don't know," he said modestly. "I guess it was simply my long experience against a crowd of youngsters. I just had something on them, that's all."

"What did you pitch to Bender,

Sam?" asked one of the scribes. "Was it a fast ball or a curve?"

"I didn't have a thing on it," replied the mysterious pitcher. "I simply smiled at him with an air of confidence and put one right in the groove."

This great pitcher of the Poison Oaks told the truth when he said that he smiled. His face always broke into a tantalizing grin when facing a batter in a critical stage of the game; and, incidentally, that is what gave him the name of "Sozo" Sam. When a fan would yell from the grandstand and asked him how he felt, Sam would reply, "So-so," and smile. This gradually grew into "Sozo," and the sobriquet hung to him throughout his long career.

THERE was more to that smile than Sozo Sam would have his listeners or his admirers know. Behind it really lurked the secret of his great success. This wonderful twirler had the wisdom of his years, however, and wisely declined to give to the world a wonderful discovery that he had made just as his arm was beginning to give way beneath the continuous strain of pitching. He knew full well that the minute his secret was exposed his career as a winning pitcher would end.

The only man who had the slightest inkling of this great secret was the manager of the Poison Oaks, and he had too much of a phlegmatic disposition to probe any deeper than surface information. If he had been too inquisitive, he would have been stopped just the same as the scribes who were looking for a big story.

Sozo Sam was such a faithful player and so well loved by his manager and fellow players that any request he might make would be granted. It was not surprising, therefore, that his manager consented to an agreement by which Sam was not to pitch on dark or cloudy days. The great pitcher had made this a provision before he would sign a contract. In fact, the manager looked upon it more as a mere whimsy than a serious matter involving the affairs of the Poison Oak club.

The fans and rooters round the circuit of the Willow Swamp League had never noticed that Sozo Sam pitched on bright days only. In fact, that was one of the even-



"One Strike!" Yelled the Umpire as Sam Cut Loose.

trities of the mysterious twirler that had never been brought to the attention of the players on the other clubs.

"And, say," said Sam to his manager one day, "promise me that you will never tell anybody that I made this request, will you?"

"It's your business," replied the manager. "I don't know why you should be so secret and mysterious about such a simple little matter; but of course if you want it that way you shall have it."

"It may seem unimportant to you," explained Sozo Sam; "but some day you may realize that the success of this club depends upon your keeping that promise. Is that enough?"

"Enough for me," acquiesced the puzzled manager, as he walked away shaking his head. Many times after that the manager would eye his eccentric pitcher with a curious look, as if wondering whether he was mentally unbalanced. He never detected anything wrong, and as the great pitcher continued to pile up victories he was well satisfied. Sozo Sam would often pitch three days in succession if the sun was shining brightly, and would win all three games. If a rainy spell set in, he would not touch a ball until every cloud had disappeared.

THE season rocked along this way for two months, and it began to look as if the Poison Oaks would win in a walk. The people of Bobbletown gave Sozo Sam entire credit for the great showing of the club, and he was treated to everything good in the town. Royalty could not have been shown more respect and admiration.

This state of baseball happiness was too perfect to last, and every rose must have its thorn, as the leading baseball writers of that day used to say. The thorn in this case came in the shape of a series of successive de-



"You Want Me to Win This Pennant?"

feats for the Poison Oaks toward the end of the season. There had been a long spell of cloudy weather, and, as Sozo Sam had not worked regularly, the pitching staff was shot to pieces. Some of the twirlers had acquired glass arms, and at times they became so wild they couldn't have hit the ground with their bats. Everything was going bad.

In the meantime the Nettle Rashes had made a great spurt and, as the baseball reporters said, "were setting the league afire." They had recovered from the memorable series at Bobbletown and were once more a dangerous factor in the race. The Poison Oaks manager was almost on the point of despair. He stuck to his promise not to pitch Sozo Sam except on sunny days,



and he watched the weather reports as carefully as the official scorer did the box scores. The cloudy days kept coming, however, and more games were lost. Occasionally there would be a dash of sunlight and Sozo Sam would go in and win; but, without his working regularly, it looked like a hopeless task for the Poison Oaks.

The bad weather lasted a little more than a month, and then the clouds began to break. The Poison Oaks manager was as happy as a schoolboy. He felt sure that the pennant was in sight again, and so enthusiastic did he grow that he raised the salaries of several of his good players.

IN the midst of this sudden happiness the manager met Sozo Sam on the main street of Bobbletown one beautiful afternoon. They were both on the way to the game, and the whole atmosphere breathed happiness.

"Say, Cap," said Sam in his mysterious manner, "I

know you want to win this pennant, don't you?" "I certainly do," replied the manager, a little puzzled. "What are you getting at now?"

"Well, there is only one way you can do it," answered Sozo Sam, "and that is to make me another promise."

"What's that?" exclaimed the manager. "Another promise! Ain't you satisfied?"

"Oh, yes," quickly replied Sam; "but if you want to win this pennant you must promise never to put me in a game on a diamond where the stands face westward."

"You certainly have gone dippy!" snapped the manager, who thought this was going a little too far. "What kind of a crazy idea is that?"

"That's not a crazy idea," said Sam, with a ring to his voice. "I mean what I say. I suppose that you noticed that the only games I have lost were played over at Catfish Shoals; and, if you will remember, the stands over there face to the west. On the other hand, all of my victories have been won on grounds where the grandstand faces the east."

"That's so," admitted the manager; "but what's that got to do with it?"

"Nothing," replied Sam a little doggedly, "except that I want the sun to shine in my face when I am pitching." "So that the ladies can see you smile and show your teeth, I guess," laughed the manager.

"That may have a little something to do with it," admitted Sam, with a mysterious smile; "but, anyway, I want you to make me that promise."

"Well, what will you do if I don't?" "I'll quit the club, that's all," was the abrupt answer.

That came as a shock to the manager, and after a lot of unsuccessful quizzing he finally consented to the arrangement.

THAT afternoon Sozo Sam went out and pitched the Poison Oaks to victory. The telegraph reports showed that the Nettle Rashes also had won another game over at their home town of Catfish Shoals, and the baseball public awoke to the startling fact that the two clubs were separated in the race for the pennant by less than five points.

The crucial test was coming. The Poison Oaks manager, though naturally nervous, felt somewhat secure in the fact that the sun was shining brightly every day, and that the schedule was so arranged that the Poison Oaks had no more games to play at Catfish Shoals. He remembered quite well that the grandstand over there faced to the west, and that Sozo Sam would not be confronted by that mysterious difficulty for the rest of the season.

The race finally narrowed down to where one game

was to decide the pennant, and, as luck would have it that deciding contest was to be played at Bobbletown, the home of the Poison Oaks. The whole country was excited over the game, and people came from points forty miles away to see the great battle for the supremacy of the Willow Swamp League.

So anxious were the Nettle Rashes to be in shape that they came over in a special train the night before the big game, that the players might have a good rest. Prominent among them were Zeke Bender, Shorty McKay, Bull Tarkington the collegian, and Sammy the recruit. They held a council that night and mapped out all kinds of plans for attack and defense. Theoretically they worked everything out in detail until there were numerous places where the game could be won by a single hit.

"And then that puts us right back where we started," mumbled Zeke Bender. "How are we going to get that one hit if Sozo Sam pitches?"

All of their plans finally led to that one baffling point. They went to sleep with the question still unsettled.

AS the town of Bobbletown awoke to prepare for the great game the green grass was flooded in brilliant sunshine. It was the day of all days for Sozo Sam. The diamond was in perfect shape, and early investigation showed that no one had tampered with the bats or gloves.

To avoid the crush of people round the park, the Poison Oaks manager got his squad of players together as early as twelve o'clock. The first man he spied was Sozo Sam.

"The day is just right for you, Sam," said the manager, "and this ought to be the day of your greatest triumph."

"Yes," replied Sozo Sam, "I don't see a cloud in the sky, and we ought to cop this one as easy as falling off a log."

Promptly at two o'clock the Nettle Rashes trotted into the park, followed by a great throng of rosters from Catfish Shoals. They were keyed up to a great effort by this support, and it cannot be said that they were lacking in confidence. At the same time Bender McKay and others occasionally cast lowering glances at Sozo Sam. Even at the distance of one hundred feet it could be seen that they were striving to fathom the mystery that enshrouded that wonderful arm.

Both teams put up a brilliant practice, and with the changing of the bell the game was finally on. Sozo Sam was announced as the pitcher for the Poison Oaks, and

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WHO WAS BELLE CARILLON

A NEW YORK ARABIAN NIGHT'S ENTERTAINMENT

XII. THE BREWSTER MANSION (Continued)

THEY took chairs near her, and Miss Carillon began: "My mother, then Mrs. Carillon, and yours, Mrs. Courtenay, were great friends. Well, you and I were born on the same day; twins, so to speak. We were brought up together as near neighbors and friends; that is, till we were four years old. That scene you have described on the ferryboat I recall perfectly. You see, we each had a locker like these; and it was mine you snatched away from me. Indeed, you had it when you were kidnapped, the same day; and that is the one Dr. Hopbottle has so miraculously restored just now. You see, there seems to have been some queer fate all through it; we couldn't be separated, in spite of everything."

"Well, your disappearance was a terrible thing. Your mother became ill, and she really died as a consequence of the shock and the horror of it. Your father spent almost every cent he had in trying to find you; but from the day you were lost nothing was ever heard by which anyone could trace you. You simply disappeared off the face of the earth. Your father died a few years afterward, a broken-down old man, intrusting the search to my father and mother. Until my own father died the search was never abandoned. Then my mother married Mr. Brewster, and the thing was given up as an insoluble mystery. But a year ago I determined to try again, and I offered the reward in hope that by that time some one might be willing to give information."

"But, Miss Carillon—" Fenton interrupted. "It was fine of you to do that; but what, really, did it matter whether I was found or not, at this late day? I don't quite see."

"Ah!" she said, smiling, "I haven't told you the main point. Will you come into the dining room with me for a moment?" She rose and led the way.

Fenton and Richmond exchanged a glance of surprise, and followed her, wondering what was to come next. Miss Carillon went to the safe and began to turn the combination. In a moment she threw open the door and looked in.

"Why, how fun!" she exclaimed, as she drew out the leather bag. "Oh, I suppose Gordon was intending to take it to the safe deposit vaults. He probably

wanted to economize room there. But how extraordinarily careless!" She rose and handed the bag of jewels to Fenton.

For the fourth time within twelve hours he received this astonishing collection of precious stones. Each time had been sensational; each time had been unlooked for; each time had been more dramatic than the last. This time capped the climax. Amazed and dazed, he found no words to express his wonder. He stood, holding the bag, looking at Miss Carillon stupidly.

"They are yours!" said Belle Carillon.

He could only repeat, "Mine?"

"Yes," she replied. "I told you that your father spent almost his last cent on the attempt to trace you; but these jewels were your mother's, and she wished them kept in case you should be found. But, despairing of that, she directed in her will that, if you should not be found by the time I and of course you were twenty-one years old, they should become mine. Well, I am twenty-one to-day—and so are you. It is our birthday!" She looked at him with laughter in her eyes.

"But do you mean to say," Fenton cried, "that you offered a thousand dollars' reward for me, so that you might not come into possession of these jewels?" She nodded gravely. "Why not?"

It was all he could do to prevent himself running to her and taking her in his arms. He knew now, though he had always felt intuitively what sort of woman she was, how fine and how loyal. To discover also what old bond connected them, thrilled him. It gave him a claim on her affection, a right to her. It explained and justified the romantic attraction she had had for him; it made reasonable and sound what might otherwise be distrusted as a too picturesque love at first sight. But did



she feel that also? He must find out. Richmond's presence embarrassed him. He gave the reporter an appealing glance.

Richmond was no fool. He rose immediately. "If you don't mind my having this story, Miss Carillon," he said, "it's really news, you know, and mighty romantic."

"I don't mind," she replied.

"Then, if you'll excuse me, I'll go into your library and begin it. I can get any details I want later," and with a wink to Fenton he left the room.

FENTON could not realize that the wealth represented by the jewels was now his. He dared not estimate their value; he knew only that he was now rich, that his future was assured. Even this, however, did not excite him. There was something far more important, far more precious, far more romantic, agitating him. His mind as well as his eyes were too full of Belle Carillon. She seemed melting—as

if she herself could not longer resist the power that had for so long been drawing them together. He gazed at her, and she answered without a word. It made him tremble; but he dared not quite believe. It seemed audacious to risk his happiness upon so subtle a sign; yet in his heart he knew, as well as if she had spoken aloud, that she was his, that it would be grotesquely impossible for her to be any other's. So, trepid, nervous, his courage growing momentarily, he watched her beautiful, expressive face, saw it soften as she looked at him. His instinct told him to be bold, while his reason warned him with conventional doubts, cautioned him to make sure, warned him of the improbability of his success.

It was Belle Carillon who first broke the silence. "I haven't told you of one strange thing," she said softly,

fuller passion, and love swept stormily over them.

"Mine, Vera, aren't you? My arms have ached for you every day for four years," she trembled in his arms; "but what a little time to pay—for this!"

OUTSIDE seemed full of shouts and cheers. Lee let her slip from him and threw wide the door.

The officer who entered with the Consul General was Captain Kellogg of the Vulture. He bent over Vera Carroll's hand. Jack Carroll looked at Lee, a glint of the oldtime devilry in his eye.

"So sorry to keep you waiting; but there wasn't any launch. I had to paddle out—"

"I was just sending in a message I had by wireless, Miss Carroll, when your brother came alongside," the Captain was proceeding solemnly. "I am ordered to take off Consul General and Miss Carroll by gunboat Vulture to the mainland, to proceed to Washington—"

"On the Vulture?" asked Vera, incredulous happiness in her voice.

"The State Department seems very appreciative of your brother's report on the

late revolution," continued the Captain with less formality.

"He's earned a promotion," asserted Vera loyally.

"Oh, pshaw! I was only paying the piper! You're—"

A terrific boom of cannon shook the house, rocked the town.

"The salute, Captain Kellogg," announced Lee imperiously, and while its thunder reverberated among the hills a vision of the papier maché Mephistopheles cowering in a closet was succeeded in his mind by a vivid suspicion that the fat President was steeped in knavery with scarred Cesare; that his fright had been pretended; that the landing of the marines had warned him that the game was up—hence the tardy salute. But what difference? He brought from the office his treasure filled cap.

"Captain Kellogg, I have the honor to present to you seventy-five hundred dollars."

The Captain accepted the soiled cap in silence; but his grave eyes twinkled. "The indemnity is paid in full," he said, and his three listeners appropriated the wisdom of his words.

A resolute nod, a lover's glance, a soft smile.

THE UNHAPPY FATE OF SOZO SAM

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opposed to him was a mediocre twirler known as Whitty Whipsaw.

Neither side was able to score a run up to the seventh inning, and the immense crowd waited with breathless anxiety the first break in luck. In the eighth inning the Poison Oaks got two bases on balls, and then a single sent the first run over the plate. For a few minutes thereafter Bobbittown was in a maelstrom of joy.

Not another flag of interest occurred until the ninth inning, when Sammy the recruit was put in to bat for Whipsaw, the Nettle Rash pitcher. He was small in stature, and being a hard man to pitch to, finally got a base on balls. Shorty McKay followed him, and shot a scratchy single past third base. Sammy took third on the hit, and the crowd waited in breathless suspense for the next move. Sozo Sam appeared to take things easy; but a gasp of half horror and half surprise went up as he deliberately gave Steve O'Hara his base on balls and filled the bases.

With three on bases and none out, Sozo Sam took a hitch in his trousers and began to pitch. Two batters in succession bit the dust by fanning at the breeze, and then came Zeke Bender. It was up to him to win or lose the pennant. A hit would turn the trick.

SOZO SAM realized that he was up against a hard proposition; but the knowledge of responsibility only spurred him on to renewed efforts.

"How are you, Sam?" yelled a fan from the grandstand.

"Oh, so-so," replied the pitcher, and his face broke into that familiar smile.

Still smiling, Sozo Sam started an out-curve for the plate; but the ball slipped from his hand and went wild. By a supreme effort the catcher stopped the ball in time to prevent a score, and Sammy the recruit hustled back to third base.

This slip apparently angered Sozo Sam, and he began to cut loose with all the speed he had left in his old arm. Again he pitched a wide one, making it two balls, and when he tried to put the next one in the groove it also failed. Bender had three balls and no strikes. Another ball would force Sammy and tie the score!

Sozo Sam became so peevish over his lack of control that he threw caution to the winds and began to wind up for his famous curve that had foiled so many batsmen. In fact, he was so engrossed in putting that ball over the plate that he neglected his usual precaution of looking at the sky.

As Sozo Sam wound up fans in the front row noticed that the sunlight was getting hazy. A small black cloud was coming up in the west!

"One strike!" yelled the umpire as Sam cut loose the ball.

Again he wound up, oblivious to the small cloud that was growing in intensity.

"Two strikes!" screamed the umpire.

By this time the cloud had so overspread the western sky that the sun was invisible. Even then Sozo Sam did not notice it. As he wound up the next time he looked up just as he was turning loose the ball. An expression of horror overspread his face, and he dodged as if evading an unseen foe. But he dodged too late!

"Crack!" the bat of Zeke Bender met the ball with the force of a piston rod, and the

white sphere came in a streak, with the speed of a bullet, straight at the face of the wonderful pitcher. With a sickening thud the ball struck him squarely on the mouth. Sozo Sam sunk to the ground half unconscious. As he stumbled he was seen to gulp, and something went down his throat. The great pitcher then sprawled across the pitcher's box unconscious.

In the meantime all three runners sped across the plate, and Zeke Bender was on the way to third when the umpire yelled, "Time!"

THE Poison Oaks players rushed in a body to the aid of the injured pitcher. Tenderly they picked him up in their arms and started for the bench. The Nettle Rash followed.

"I know what I am doing," finally said Sozo Sam as he struggled to free himself and began to regain his senses. Then he burst into tears.

"It's all right, old man," said the manager in an effort to soothe him. "It's all right."

"No, no!" replied Sam as he continued to weep. "Nothing is right! I'm done with baseball! My days are over! I've swallowed it! I've swallowed it!" suddenly burst from the lips of the stricken pitcher as he fell back on the bench. "My career is ended! I tell you I've swallowed it!" This time he almost screamed.

"Swallowed what?" asked the manager.

"The secret of my success. The gold tooth!" The gold tooth!

The players, believing Sam out of his mind, examined his mouth. Sure enough, the bright gold tooth was gone.

"But that's all right," said the manager. "That won't hurt."

"Won't hurt!" screamed Sam as he continued to weep hysterically. "That gold tooth has won you all your games. It was the cloud that put me out of business. I know. And I didn't see it until I had turned loose the ball."

"The man's crazy," suggested one of the players. "Send for a doctor."

"I don't need any doctor," screamed Sozo Sam. "It's all off with me as a pitcher. The cloud did it, and then I swallowed the gold tooth."

"Do you mean—" began Sammy, the Nettle Rash recruit, who had edged his way into the crowd—and then a light began to strike his mystified brain.

"Yes," said Sozo Sam most pitiously, "that's it. I would catch the light from the sun on my gold tooth, and as I smiled I would flash the reflection in the batter's eye. He would flinch and miss the ball. The cloud came up and killed the flash. Oh, I should never have pitched! he moaned, "I should have walked out of the box!"

"That's all right," spoke the manager.

"Why, Sam, we will get the finest dentist in the land, and have him make you the best gold tooth in America."

"No good," responded the grief stricken pitcher. "Nothing doing now. They are onto my secret, and all they would have to do to beat me would be to switch the stands. With the sun in my back I couldn't make good on the Highschool Browns. A whole mouthful of gold teeth wouldn't help me now."

The Poison Oaks had another chance at bat; but the calamity had killed their



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spirit. Three men struck out, and the Nettle Rash won the pennant.

"Say, Shorty," said Zeke Bender as the victorious team left the park that night, "didn't I tell you that I saw a flash of light when I struck out two weeks ago?"

WHAT THIS EARTH AMOUNTS TO

SOMETIMES this old world seems a rather large place, and occasionally one gets the idea that there are a great many people; but, after all, there are only fifty-six million square miles of land on which we may build houses and grow crops and walk about, and there are only fifteen hundred million persons to do these things. If the earth's population was evenly apportioned to the various continents and islands, there would be twenty-seven persons on each square mile; but, as it is, there are 101.2 persons to each square mile in Europe, 9.1 persons on a like area in Asia, 14.3 in North America, and only 1.5 in Australasia. The polar regions are the really lonely lands, however; for there the population is only six-hundredths of a person to the square mile. The total population of the earth at the time of the death of Emperor Augustus was not over fifty-four millions, about three-fifths the present population of the United States, and the total population of Europe did not exceed fifty millions before the fifteenth century.

The greatest depth of the Pacific Ocean is supposed to be nearly six miles, and that of the Atlantic four and one-half miles.

The peoples of the world, after much contention, have divided themselves into some fifty principal political divisions.

The average duration of a human life is about thirty-three years. One-quarter of the people on the earth die before reaching the age of six, one-half before sixteen, and only one person out of each hundred born lives to be sixty-five. It is calculated that every minute there are sixty-seven deaths, ninety-three thousand a day, or thirty-five million a year. Births take place at the rate of seventy a minute, one hundred thousand a day, or thirty-six million each year.

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